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Members of Resources and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cambridgeshire County Council

**Customer Service and Transformation**

**Democratic and Members' Services**

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Cambridge
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SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

Dear Councillors

**RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 6TH JULY 2012**

I attach a report marked as 'to follow' on the agenda for the above meeting:

Item 4) Communications Member Led Review

Please bring this with you to the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Rowe

Michelle Rowe
Senior Democratic Services Officer

EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACHIEVING

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**Agenda Item No.4**

## COMMUNICATIONS MEMBER LED REVIEW

| | |
|---|---|
| *To:* | **Resources and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee** |
| *Date:* | **6th July 2012** |
| *From:* | **Communications Member Led Review Group** |
| *Electoral division(s):* | **All** |
| *Forward Plan ref:* | **N/A** *Key decision:* **No** |
| *Purpose:* | **To present the Committee with the draft findings and recommendations from a Member led review of the Council's communications arrangements.** |
| *Recommendation:* | **The Committee is asked to:** |

- **Consider and, if necessary, amend the findings and recommendations of the review group; and**
- **Endorse the report for submission to Cabinet subject to any amendments agreed at the meeting**



| | ***Officer contact:*** | | ***Member contact:*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Name: | Robert Jakeman | Name: | Councillor Fred Brown |
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## PART A – BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2010, the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee (predecessor to the current Resources and Performance Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee) decided to examine the relationship between centrally, or corporately, managed functions and the Council's services. They started with the Council's communications function as a case study.

1.2 Members were provided with an overview of the costs and staffing allocations associated with the Council's communications function at that time. They were also advised that the Strategic Management Team (SMT) had commissioned a review of the Council's communications, marketing and publications to ensure that these supported strategic objectives and provided value for money.

1.3 The Committee received an update about the review during December 2010. Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, a Member of the Resources and Performance O&S Committee requested a further update which was considered on the 12th December 2011. Members learned about changes to the Communications function (such as the departure of the Head of Communications and additional responsibilities in relation to public health promotion) and savings that had been achieved following a review of Council publications. However, Members at this point decided that they would like to conduct their own communications review to build upon work that had been carried out by Officers.

1.4 The Committee commissioned Councillors Fred Brown (who chaired the review), Geoff Harper and Lucy Nethsingha to lead the review. Councillor Bob Farrer also participated as a substitute Member.

### 2.0 PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

2.1 In conducting their review, Members aimed to:

- Investigate the purpose and objectives of the Council's communications function
- Learn about the roles played by communicators across the Council and how communication activities are coordinated
- Review the structures that have been put in place to deliver the Council's communications purpose and objectives
- Examine the costs associated with Council communications, their value for money and potential ways of improving efficiency
- Consider recent and planned changes to communications arrangements.
- Develop recommendations for improvement based on the above, for implementation by Cabinet and the Strategic Management Team (SMT)

2.2 Members were mindful that the Customer Service and Transformation Directorate (which includes the Corporate Communications Team) is currently

being restructured and that this provides an opportunity for Members to influence this process. However, Members intend for their findings and recommendations to inform communications arrangements across the whole Council.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The review group collected evidence from the following principal sources:

- The three Committee sessions that took place in 2010 and 2011
- A meeting with the Corporate Director: Customer Service and Transformation in January 2012
- Staffing and financial information collated from across the Council, and the response to a Freedom of Information request[1]
- A series of meetings during June 2012, involving:
    - A sample of communication professionals, and colleagues they regularly work with, across most key departments within the Council (a full list is provided in **Appendix A**)
    - The lead communications Officer from Central Bedfordshire Council, as a comparator
    - Two SMT members – the Corporate Director: Customer Service and Transformation and Executive Director: Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care

3.2 The group would like to thank everyone who participated in the review. The report was emailed to those involved prior to the Committee meeting due to be held on the 6th July. The Scrutiny and Improvement Officer will summarise any feedback received to inform the Committee discussion.

## 4.0 DEFINING COMMUNICATIONS

4.1 From the outset, it became clear to the review group that Officers across the Council often have different interpretations of the term 'communications' and associated terms such as 'internal communications', 'external communications' and 'marketing'. Whilst everybody involved had a clear understanding of their own role in relation to communication activities, it was apparent that there were no common definitions applied across the organisation. There was therefore sometimes a degree of uncertainty about what the Members were actually investigating.

4.2 Members decided to take a holistic view of 'communications', looking beyond the reputational and media related functions performed by the corporate communications team. They agreed that 'communications' should encompass all the key methods and channels that the Council uses to convey information to the public, media and partners (external communications) and within the organisation (internal communications)[2]. This therefore included

[1] The Freedom of Information request was not initiated by Members

[2] It is recognised that there is an overlap between internal and external communications as many staff are also local residents and naturally pass information about the Council into local communities. The group found several examples where communications staff performed by both internal and external communications roles.

information provision, such as via the internet and the Contact Centre, and information exchange through the Council's community engagement and consultation initiatives. It also included promotional, or marketing, campaigns (e.g. campaigns to promote library use).

4.3 However, Members recognised that everybody across the organisation is involved in communication activities in one form or another. They therefore decided to concentrate on the strategic arrangements, including staff who are employed to fulfil a communications role for at least 50% of their time, or who have a key role in coordinating communications.

## PART B – FINDINGS

## 5.0 CHANGE ACROSS THE AUTHORITY

5.1 There were several occasions when Members were advised by communicators that there had been a great deal of uncertainty in recent years about the Council's communications functions, and that they believed several experienced and capable members of staff had left the organisation as a result. They also advised that this had had a negative impact on their morale.

5.2 The review group therefore believe that irrespective of whether the rest of their recommendations are accepted or not, it is important for the Council's communications arrangements to be resolved as soon as possible, within a fixed timeframe, so that there is greater certainty about the future for all those involved.

## 6.0 CURRENT STAFFING AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 The review group requested information about the Council's expenditure on communications, staffing numbers and their deployment. Information was provided by each key Council department to fulfil this request. However, in some instances this information was not available quickly for several reasons, including:

- Communicators are based throughout the authority and are not centrally managed or funded (aside from the corporate communications team, contact centre and community engagement directorate). If a service chooses to allocate funding for communications purposes, then this will come out of their overall budget. This expenditure could be allocated against a number of different cost centre codes as a 'communications' code does not exist.
- Communications expenditure can currently be defined in different ways. For example, the review group chose to include costs associated with the Contact Centre and the Council's website as communications expenditure, but this would not normally be counted as communications expenditure by Officers.
- Many staff across the Council perform communications roles, but the exact proportion of their time (as a percentage) spent on communications is not normally defined (unless this is a substantial part of their role).

6.2 To ensure that disproportionate amounts of Officer time was not spent in collating precise amounts of communications expenditure, the group agreed to limit their request to readily available information, including details of staff whose primary role (50% or more) is involved in communications. However, the group felt that the difficulties in getting the information they had requested showed that there are flaws in the management information for the current communications arrangements. This is a theme that the group return to later in this report.

6.3 A summary of the findings are listed in Table 1 below. The full response is provided in **Appendix B**.

**Table 1**

| **Service Department** | **2011/12 Budget (£)** | **2011/12 Budget Actual Spend (£)** | **2012/13 Budget (£)** | **Full Time Equivalent Employees (2012/13)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community and Adult Services *1 | 112, 379 | 109, 666 | 121, 378 | 2.95 |
| Children and Young People Services (CYPS) | 564, 290 | 532, 980 | 539, 429 | 9.9 |
| Customer Service and Transformation (CST) *2 | 1,158, 493 | 1,550, 683 | 1,416, 435 | 78.8 |
| Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE) | 224, 618 | 201,955 | 147,406 | 6.2 |
| LGSS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | 2,059,780 | 2,395,284 | 2,224,648 | 97.85 |

*1 - The management of the functions within this directorate have now changed
*2 - The figures for this row include the Corporate Communications Team, Web Strategy Team and the Contact Centre. The £761,722 is net of income, including £1,090,288 from internal and external recharges associated with the Contact Centre.

6.4 Having received the above factual information, the group decided to meet

communicators from across the Council to find out about their roles, which forms the basis of the bulk of the remainder of this report.

## 7.0 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Coordination across the Council

7.1 The group met with Officers responsible for coordinating communications across the Council's key service areas. They found that this currently includes an Internal Communications Manager (within the Corporate Communications Team) with responsibilities in relation to Council wide (i.e. corporate) communications, and an Officer in each key service area whose role is to coordinate communications within that area. This includes support for employee workshops, manager briefings and service newsletters, for example. However, only the Internal Communications Manager is employed solely as a communications professional. Communications is one element of the roles of the other Officers interviewed by the group.

7.2 The group queried how the Officers coordinate their activities and were advised that there is a monthly Internal Communications Board that they all attend which fulfils this role. In addition, a partnership communications board involving the Mental Health Trust, GP consortia and Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) has recently been formed in recognition of their partnership arrangements with the Council, such as the services provided by CCS on behalf of the Council. Indeed, Members were advised that considerable time is spent by Council officers on communications associated with services provided by CCS.

7.3 The group also noted that directorate newsletters are now mostly circulated electronically, with minimal paper copies produced for those without access to a computer, which has resulted in savings. The content within these newsletters are not signed off centrally, but the Internal Communications Manager contributes articles and Officers advised that each newsletter reports on issues associated with their service area, so there is no duplication. A review of publications had also enabled the Council to save approximately £300,000 per annum. This is a significant achievement that was considered when the group developed their recommendations (see section 9.14).

7.4 The group met Officers based in Children and Young People's Services separately and were advised that there is no single lead for communications as there are a range of Officers involved, with both internal and external communications roles. However, a communications strategy group meets regularly, which includes representation from the corporate communications team. Nonetheless, Members were advised that internal communications within the service could be coordinated more effectively, for example, in relation to staff information, policy changes and webpages.

Recent changes and planned changes to internal communications

7.5 The review group questioned the internal communicators about the scope of

their activities and their experiences of the changes that had taken place, and are planned to take place. Members were advised that:

- 5 years ago there had been 3 FTE internal communications Officers. It has recently been decided that the Internal Communications Manager post will be made redundant so there will be no full time resource dedicated to internal communications
- An important element of the Internal Communications Manager role has been to work closely with the Council's Human Resources and Organisational Development functions in relation to activities such as the Employee Survey, the Council's 'Fit for Business' initiative (promoting health and wellbeing amongst staff) and the staff award scheme, Recognition of Outstanding Customer Service (ROCS). Members were advised that these had helped the Council achieve a gold rating within the Investors in People scheme. These activities have been discontinued (although staff award schemes do continue to exist in some services).
- The Council used to produce an internal newsletter, 'Countywide', to disseminate key messages across the Council, but this had been discontinued
- The Internal Communications Manager continues to support 'Daily Briefing' (a daily email sent to all staff and Members) and assistance to the Chief Executive in relation to his blog. However, it was unclear how or if these functions would continue under the new staffing arrangements

7.6 In the ensuing discussion, it became clear that there was a consensus amongst the Officers that effective internal communications are particularly important during times of intense change and uncertainty, as currently being experienced by staff across the Council. It was agreed that the discontinuation of 'Countywide' had resulted in a lack of focus, and that there would be a void if 'Daily Briefing' was stopped.

7.7 The Scrutiny and Improvement Officer undertook some research on behalf of Members in relation to the use of 'Daily Briefing'. He found that Daily Briefing is sent to staff by email, but is also available via the Council's intranet, 'Camweb'. Information is not kept about how many staff open the Daily Briefing email (due to the numbers involved this would cause IT difficulties). However, between 1st May to 31st May 2012 there were 16,100 instances where Daily Briefing was viewed via Camweb[3]. It is not clear whether there is a difference in usage between staff based at Shire Hall and the other Council offices. The usefulness of Daily Briefing to staff has not been evaluated for several years, although the Scrutiny and Improvement Officer has been advised that this, and other communication methods, are due to be reviewed in the near future to ensure that they can be adapted to current needs, if required.

7.8 The Internal Communications Manager felt that there had been a lack of strategic steer since the Council's Human Resources and Organisational

[3] Source – Web Transformation Team, based on a 'Google Analytics' search. This figure refers to staff who have 'bookmarked' the Daily Briefing intranet page in their 'favourites' and then accessed this link

Development functions had been allocated to LGSS (a joint partnership arrangement with Northamptonshire County Council), with no strategy or action plan for internal communications.

7.9 Discussions with two SMT members about the employee survey revealed that this process had had limited benefits in the past, due to varying degrees in which services had actively engaged in responding to the results of the survey.

7.10 Members have subsequently been advised that the Council currently uses focus groups to gain the views of staff (for example in relation to the Internal Transformation Project) and intends to use short 'pulse surveys' in the future to gain insights about staff views on specific issues.

Communications from Strategic Management Team (SMT)

7.11 Members queried how key messages from the Council's SMT (the Council's most senior officer management team) are disseminated across the Council. Members found that Mark Lloyd reports on these meetings on his blog and that SMT Members disseminate information in their service areas.

7.12 Members questioned the possible merits of publishing the SMT minutes (with confidential or sensitive information redacted) in order to facilitate greater communication across the Council and to aid transparency in decision making. In response, the two SMT members that the group spoke to indicated that it is important for SMT to be able to discuss confidential issues privately, and that this could mean that the levels of redaction would render publication meaningless. However, they felt that the issue merited further consideration.

**Member Views**

7.13 Members were generally pleased to hear that key internal communicators across the Council meet regularly to coordinate their activities and avoid duplication. Although there are some inconsistencies, for example in terms of newsletter production (most services produce newsletters, some do not currently), efforts have been made to communicate sensible and efficiently (using electronic communication where possible). An area which could be improved is in relation to internet and intranet pages, as there are considerable inconsistencies in the way that different services manage and update these pages[4]. This is particularly important given the reliance of Contact Centre staff on these pages (see section 8.2).

7.14 Members noted that a considerable amount of time is spent on communications activities associated with CCS. They felt that there may be potential to share the staffing implications of this with CCS and believe this should be investigated.

[4] It is important to note that whilst there is central oversight of the Council's intranet and internet pages, day to day management and responsibility for the content of these pages lies with trained leads within each service area

7.15 However, Members were concerned to hear about the discontinuation of some corporate communications activities, particularly the Employee Survey[5]. They believe that it is particularly crucial to disseminate key messages to staff during changing times, and to listen and respond to their views. They accept that the Employee Survey in itself is only a source of information, that its value lays in providing intelligence that leads to change, and they understand why this has been deprioritised if there have been limited changes in the past. However, Members believe that the potential benefits of gaining an insight into staff views are substantial as a source of management information, and are therefore pleased to hear that focus group activities do take place regarding some issues, and that there are plans to introduce 'pulse' surveys. Nonetheless, whilst these initiatives are welcome and supported, Members believe a review should be conducted to ensure that there are effective mechanisms for gathering and responding to employee views across the Council. Clearly, it will be crucial to ensure that any new arrangements are of value to both employees and service managers.

7.16 Members also wish to stress the potential value of schemes that promote their health and wellbeing (such as the 'fit for business' scheme). These activities can be important in enabling the Council to recruit and retrain staff and improve morale and productivity. The benefits of these activities can not easily be measured in financial terms, but intuitively, they significantly outweigh the costs of facilitating them. Members believe it would be desirable to maintain these activities and that Officers should examine whether it is possible to reintroduce these schemes within the resources available.

7.17 Members also believe that staff recognition schemes can work well in helping to celebrate and reinforce excellence. However, whilst it is accepted that some services do have their own recognition methods, the corporate impetus seems to have drastically reduced. The group believe that this situation should be reviewed, and that added impetus and profile could be given to the scheme by involving Cabinet Portfolio Holders in a corporate scheme. This would also have the benefit of increasing the engagement between Portfolio Holders and a wide variety of staff.

7.18 The group believe that it is important for key corporate messages to be conveyed clearly and simply to all staff so that there is a common sense of purpose. Their view is that whilst Mark Lloyd's blog is a useful means of communication, it cannot entirely substitute for other forms of internal communication. They therefore believe that it would be desirable to reintroduce 'Countywide', if this is possible within existing resources, and to retain 'Daily Briefing'. However, it will be important to evaluate these communication channels, in consultation with staff, to ensure that they remain relevant and useful. They also believe that there could be benefits in publishing SMT minutes on the Council's intranet for the benefit of staff. However, it is recognised that some redaction would be required, so it is recommended that publication is piloted in order to assess its usefulness.

[5] Members were advised that the Economy, Transport and Environment Survey had conducted an Employee Survey

## 8.0 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Service Based Staff

8.1 The group met a large sample of staff with communication roles across most of the Council's key service areas. They met staff from each key service area, and then convened a group meeting which also involved senior staff with responsibilities, for example, in relation to community engagement and the contact centre.

8.2 Table 1 shows that the Council employs 97.85 FTE employees dedicated to communications activities (68.8 working in the Contact Centre), as defined by the review group[6]. It was therefore not possible for Members to review every communication role performed by the Council. However, the following provides some simplified examples:

Adult Social Care

- Information to service users regarding changes to day services
- Communicating with service users regarding self directed support and other major changes

Children and Young People Services

- Information and targeted news for parents and carers to support them in raising their children coordinated across CYPS by the Family Information Service team
- Promotion, public relations and recruitment activities associated with Fostering and Adoption. This part time, 12 month post was introduced as part of the Council's Placement Strategy.
- Communications to early years and childcare settings and schools regarding delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage and statutory functions under the Childcare Act 2006
- Education Portal; a website which acts as a single point of contact for schools to share good practice, learning materials and other information

Contact Centre

- First point of contact on behalf of 34 Council services, predominately through incoming telephone calls (approximately 1,500 per month). Most contacts are associated with social care queries. The Contact Centre plays a key role in answering and resolving queries for the benefit of those raising the queries and to ensure that service staff can focus on their roles (thereby saving money and improving productivity)
- Contact Centre workers regularly use the Council's internet pages in order to answer queries.
- There is regular contact with services to ensure that the Contact Centre scripts that they use with callers are accurate and useful

[6] This figure does not include the community engagement team (comprising approximately 20 employees)

Community Engagement

- Responsible for development and implementation of strategies to enable the Council to work with the local community effectively
- Communication activities include support for the Cambridgeshire.net website, which provides residents and communities with online access to local information and services, including a database of over 4500 community organisations in the county
- Support for the 'Shape your Place' website which facilitates conversations in local areas about community issues, including the ability for residents to propose suggestions which are then responded to

Corporate Communications

- 24 / 7 communications support to all Councillors, Senior Managers and Council services (with team members being allocated to key service areas, attending their management teams, for example). Key responsibilities in relation to the Council's reputation management, and associated links with the media (handling thousands of enquiries over the course of a year)
- Management of corporate print contract; oversight of Council branding; social media lead role
- Provision of communication services to East Cambridgeshire District Council

Economy, Transport and Environment

- Passenger development - including provision of information at bus stops (e.g. real time information about bus arrivals) and rail stations. Also promotional activities to encourage people to use public transport. The team have raised over £200,000 since 2006 to support this activity
- Traffic management - communications with the public about road closures (e.g. associated with events such as the Jubilee celebrations), and traffic congestion (for example by Twitter - there are over 700 followers currently).
- Highways - Communications with Parishes regarding Heavy Commercial Vehicles, and in relation to road safety, street works, street lights, parking, gritting and the highway wardens scheme

8.3 Although far from comprehensive, this summary provides a sense of the breadth of activities across the Council that could be labelled as communications activities.

8.4 Members heard a large number of views about the Council's communication arrangements during the course of the review. The following provides a summary of some of the key themes that arose regularly, or which the Members felt were particularly important (in no particular order):

- **Publicising good news** - several Officers felt that the Council could improve in this area, both in terms of internal and external communications.

- **Developing the Council's website** - several Officers felt that the website lacks functionality and that the opportunities to innovate are limited, for example in relation to social media such as Twitter. It was also noted that Fostering agencies, for example, are able to develop much more attractive and accessible websites than the Council, which is an impediment.

- **Role of the Corporate Communications team** - Members were advised that the system of allocating corporate team members to key department areas works well. Several officers advised that they used the corporate team as a conduit for external communications purposes. The Service Director: Community Engagement advised that he works regularly with a Communications Officer but who is managed through the Corporate Communications team, and that this arrangement works well

- **Savings and cost avoidance** - Members noted that the Corporate Communications team includes a team member who provides communications support for East Cambridgeshire District Council who pays for his services. It was also noted that promotional, or marketing, activities are likely to become increasingly important. For example, the Council will need to be competitive in providing services to schools. The effectiveness of the Fostering and Adoption role could also save the Council significant sums in excess of the £40,000 staffing costs. Another example is that effective promotion of recycling enables the Council, and District Authorities, to reduce waste management costs. Members also heard that is can be counter productive to not consider the value of communications resource, with communications problems experienced as part of the street lighting PFI being cited as an example.

- **Risk of cost shunting** - one Officer cited an example where they had heard that a service had approached the Corporate Communications team for communications support for a marketing campaign they wished to initiate, but there had been insufficient capacity to help. The Officer had therefore recruited communications resource instead.

- **Coordination** - the group were informed about a number of groups that meet regularly to coordinate external communications activities across the Council, such as a Marketing Forum. Members were also advised about improvements to coordinated external communications with partners, for example in relation to the 'Shape your Place' website. However, Members were sceptical about the extent to which information from these meetings is disseminated to others.

Advertisement Costs Associated with Traffic Regulation Orders

8.5 Members queried whether the Council continues to pay for large advertisements of traffic orders and other statutory information through local newspapers, or whether links to the Council were being published instead. Officers provided a recent example where this had happened in relation to an event, and Members were keen that this process becomes part of day to day activity.

8.6 The Scrutiny and Improvement Officer investigated this issue further on behalf of the review group[7]. He found that current guidance (associated with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Act 1994) states that, 'At minimum, [public notification] should entail the publication of a notice in at least one local newspaper.'

8.7 The Council issues Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in relation to permanent changes, such as the introduction of double yellow lines, and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) which are generally in relation to road works and events. There are relatively few TROs, but approximately 360 works TTROs, 175 special events TTROs and over 100 emergency TTROs per year (which are not advertised). On average, the cost for the advertisement of a TTRO is £600, so the advertising costs for a year could be £321,000 (on the basis of 535 TTROs being advertised). This cost is borne by those doing the work, such as utility companies or the Council for maintenance works. Ultimately, of course, these costs are then passed on to the taxpayer, utility customers and local businesses.

8.8 The Department for Communities and Local Government has indicated a willingness to remove restrictions associated with advertisements, and the Department for Transport has issued a consultation that proposes that regulations should be relaxed so that Local Authorities are able to publicise their TROs in a manner that is appropriate for their target audience and to reduce costs[8].

8.9 In the meantime, the Council has adopted a policy of solely advertising event related TTROs on the Council's website. Officers have been working together to discuss possible further changes to advertising following any change to current regulations.

8.10 Members support this work and recommend that the Council becomes fully prepared to use the Council's website as the principal means of advertisement, if and when regulations are relaxed to enable this to happen. In the meantime, Members believe that some savings could be derived by reducing the content of newspaper advertisements to the statutory minimum, referring the reader to the Council's website wherever possible.

8.11 Before the Members developed their findings in relation to external communications, they met Georgina Stanton, lead Communications Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council to learn about their communications arrangements.

## 9.0 COMPARATOR CASE STUDY - CENTRAL BEDFORSHIRE COUNCIL

9.1 Central Bedfordshire Council is a Unitary Council that was formed in 2009

[7] Source – Traffic Managers Service

[8] Source - http://assets.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-06/main-document.pdf . The consultation started in January 2012 and ran for 12 weeks. It is not currently clear what actions will be taken in response to feedback from the consultation.

following the dissolution of Bedfordshire County Council. Members invited Georgina Stanton to meet them to find out how a neighbouring Council has developed its communication arrangements and on the basis of a recommendation from the Corporate Director: Customer Service and Transformation.

9.2 Georgina has worked in communications for District, County (Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils) and Unitary Councils. Georgina advised the group that these Councils had different structural arrangements for their communications arrangements ranging from a dispersed system of communications, involving a central team, with communicators also based in service areas (similar to the Cambridgeshire approach) to more 'centralised' approaches with all key communicators based and managed within a central team. In Essex, this centralised model included management of the Contact Centre and website.

9.3 Georgina advised the group that she had been attracted to her role in Central Bedfordshire because of the opportunity to setup a new communications function from scratch. She developed a team of 10 Communications Officers, a designer and 2 Graduate Trainees, divided into internal and external communications functions. The team also pays for freelance workers, where additional skills are needed for specific tasks, such as marketing campaigns. The team has responsibility for the Council's website, consultation and market research functions. There is a forward plan to coordinate communications initiatives across the Council.

9.4 Georgina emphasised that whilst the approach taken in Central Bedfordshire has been to centralise the communications function, her team has been setup to service the whole Council and aims to ensure that the Council 'speaks with one voice'. Team members work closely with colleagues in service departments to support their communication requirements.

9.5 Members were advised that Central Bedfordshire Council had relatively low customer satisfaction ratings three years ago. However, the Communications team has sought to use feedback from complaints and other customer data to take a data led approach to its communications, which has resulted in a doubling of customer satisfaction over the past three years. New branding and decisions about strategic communications messages that the Council wished to convey had also played an important part.

9.6 Central Bedfordshire Council's Communications team does not include responsibility for management of their Contact Centre. However, Members queried whether Georgina felt that there would be benefits in changing this, given her experience in Essex. Georgina advised that she would support the inclusion of the Contact Centre within the communications function, given the pivotal role it has as interface with the public.

**Member Views**

9.7 Having met communicators from across the Council, Members gained a good

understanding of their roles, and generally how integral they are to the effective day to day running of the organisation. It is clear that the Council's communications function expands far beyond that of the corporate communications team. Members also appreciate that some job titles can be misleading, as they do not always reflect that some professional communicators also perform roles that are instrumental in achieving service targets.

Scope of the Communications Function

9.8 A key line of enquiry followed by Members throughout the review was whether the Council has defined the scope of the communications function appropriately. Members considered the potential linkages between:

- Corporate Communications
- Website Management
- Contact Centre
- Community Engagement
- Corporate Consultation activities

9.9 Members believe that effective communication entails a dialogue between the Council and the public, partners and the media that enables the Council to express key messages, but also to respond to messages received. All of the above 5 services share a common trait in that they enable key information flows into and out of the Council and interaction with the public (or the media as a proxy). It is therefore unsurprising that some Authorities have brought all or some (such as Central Bedfordshire Council) of these functions together.

9.10 Members concluded that the restructure within the Customer Services and Transformation directorate provides an opportunity to combine these functions into a single 'Community Engagement and Communications' service. This would ensure that there is consistency across the Council's key communication channels, and a single hub from which to receive and then disseminate key messages and information from outside the organisation. However, in the case of the Contact Centre, Members recognise that significant changes are underway, or are planned, from technological updates, so it is recommended that the merger of this team takes place when these changes have been embedded.

9.11 Members' recommendation is not made because of any systemic failings that they have discovered, but in order to strengthen the existing arrangements. It would also develop the Council's resilience to maintain its communication function.

Relationship between the Corporate and Service Based Communicators

9.12 Another key line of enquiry for the review group was whether there would be merit in 'centralising' communications resources, as has happened in Central Bedfordshire.

9.13 Generally, Members found that there were good reasons for service based communicators to be located and managed within their service. Working alongside colleagues within services enables effective information exchange and learning that is integral to the communicator role. Whilst Members can understand why some Authorities have adopted a fully centralised approach to line management, they do not believe that it is necessary in Cambridgeshire.

9.14 However, Members believe that it is important for there to be a strong relationship between corporate and service based communicators. This entails consistent communication of corporate messages, common standards and joint planning of key communications (i.e. a corporate communications plan). In essence, this is about the Council speaking and listening as one on corporate issues. Members found evidence that this happens to some extent through coordinating groups, and the presence of corporate communicators within services. They also see the savings achieved through the publications review as an example of what can be achieved through a degree of central ownership and control. However, they believe that this can be strengthened further. In order to achieve this, Members propose that existing line management arrangements are maintained, but that 'dotted line' management arrangements are introduced between the central function and key service communicators.[9] This would mean that the central communications function would have some oversight and involvement in key communication activities[10]. It would enable the Council to have a better grasp of the total costs and staffing allocations associated with communications.

9.15 It is clear that the Council currently operates several Officer groups that are dedicated to communications and/or marketing activities. Whilst Members have not evaluated the value of each of these groups, and welcome efforts to coordinate activities, their view is that the management arrangements that they propose, coupled with more extensive use of technology such as Sharepoint, would provider stronger clarity and oversight and thereby enable some of these groups to disband, releasing more time for other tasks.

9.16 In addition, Members recognise that it is equally incumbent for corporate communications staff to be fully integrated into the services they support. Members found some evidence that this happens already, but recommend that the corporate team spend more time based within the services.

## 10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

1) Finalise changes associated with communications staffing as quickly as possible, within a definite timescale that is communicated to affected staff.

[9] The specific 'key communicators' have not been defined, as this would need to be judged on a post by post basis.

[10] This would operate similarly to the 'category management' approach used by LGSS for procurement services.

2) Investigate the potential to share staffing costs for communications activities associated with services provided by CCS, with CCS.

3) The Council has discontinued its employee survey. Alternative methods such as focus groups and 'pulse surveys' are being used instead, or are being planned for use, in some service areas. Members welcome and support these developments but recommend that a review should be conducted to ensure that there are effective mechanisms for gathering and responding to employee views across the Council.

4) The Council should re-examine whether corporate schemes designed to promote staff health and wellbeing can be reintroduced within the resources available.

5) The Council should seek to rejuvenate its corporate staff recognition scheme. One method of achieving this would be through involving Cabinet Members in the selection process and in presenting awards to winning staff working within services associated with their Portfolios.

6) It would be desirable to reintroduce 'Countywide' and to retain 'Daily Briefing', if possible within the resources available. However, these communication methods should be reviewed, in consultation with employees, to ensure that they remain relevant and useful.

7) SMT minutes, with redactions if necessary, should be published for internal circulation on a trial basis.

8) The Council should seek to advertise TROs in ways that are proportionate and offer value for money. This should include:
   a) Focussed, minimalistic advertising in newspapers, referring to the Council website where possible
   b) Sole advertising on the Council's website (as the default position), if and when regulations are relaxed to allow this

9) a) The following functions should be brought together into a single service, in order to strengthen the Council's corporate communication arrangements:

   - Corporate Communications
   - Website Management
   - Community Engagement
   - Corporate consultation activities

   b) This service should develop strong relations with the Contact Centre, potentially leading to a merger in the future once impending IT changes at the Contact Centre have been fully implemented.

10) 'Dotted line' management arrangements should be established

between the central communications function and key service communicators to ensure that there is central oversight and involvement in key communications activities.

11) The Central Corporate Communications team should spend more time based in services that they are linked to, in order to develop communications links with service based colleagues.

| **Source Documents** | **Location** |
|---|---|
| • Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee minutes and reports (29th September 2010 and 1st December 2010) http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CMSWebsite/Apps/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=42<br>• Resources and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee minutes and reports (12th December 2011) http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CMSWebsite/Apps/Committees/Committee.aspx?committeeID=49<br>• Other sources are referenced throughout the report | Shire Hall room 116. Contact Robert Jakeman on 01223 699143 or robert.jakeman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk |

## APPENDIX A – CONTRIBUTORS TO THE REVIEW

The group spoke to the following during the course of the review:

Adult Social Care

- Geoff Hinkins – Regulation and Inspection Manager
- Simon Willson – Head of Regulation, Performance and Business Support

Children and Young People's Services

- Hazel Belchamber – Head of Infrastructure: Education Planning
- Hannah Fox – Executive Officer
- Duncan Grey – Education Portal Manager
- Chris Hopwood – Marketing Manager, Fostering and Adoption
- Jane Leet – Communications and Partnership Manager
- Adrian Loades – Executive Director – Children and Young People's Services and Adult Social Care
- Mary Whitehand – Families Information Service Team Manager

Customer Service and Transformation

- Mark Andrews – Head of Contact Centre Services
- Mike Davey – Service Director: Community Engagement
- Adrian Dobbyne – Head of Business Support
- Pat Harding – Corporate Director: Customer Service and Transformation
- Mark Miller – External Communications Manager
- Eleanor Pasfield – Communications Officer
- Tony Taylorson – Communications and Media Manager
- Glenn Thwaites – Communications and Media Manager
- Sally Titmus – Internal Communications Manager

Economy, Transport and Environment

- Nicola Dear – Acting Head of Business Support
- Michael Harber – Passenger Transport Development Manager
- Debbie Maith – Information Strategy Manager
- Claire Robson – Communications Manager (Network Management)
- Russell De Ville – Traffic Manager

**APPENDIX B** – Communications Expenditure and Staffing Details

The summary on page 5 provides the overall picture of communications expenditure and staffing deployment. The detailed breakdown by each key service area is listed below:

Adult Social Care

| Post Title / Description of Cost | 11/12 Budget | 11/12 Actual to Mar 12 | 12/13 Budget £ | 12/13 FTEs | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **External Communications:** | | | | | |
| Staffing | 82,134 | 77,166 | 98,966 | 2.95 | This includes on costs. |
| ASC Printing | 13,820 | 5,333 | 13,820 | | Leaflets distributed Feb/Mar |
| ASC Postage | 1,230 | 478 | 1,230 | | Leaflets distributed Feb/Mar |
| CE(F) - Prevention campaign leaflets | 5,595 | 4,110 | [redacted] | | Leaflets and prevention campaigns/**Budget in CYPS 12/13** |
| LLC - public communications | 9,600 | 22,579 | 7,362 | | Library consultaions/opening hours/special activities for libraries - posters (children/workshops...). **Budget in Corp 12/13** |
| | **112,379** | **109,666** | **121,378** | **2.95** | |

Note 12/13 budget may change in year.

## Children and Young People's Services

| Post Title / Description of Cost | Sep 2010 data £ | 11/12 Budget £ | 11/12 Actual £ | 12/13 Budget £ | 12/13 FTEs | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CYPS** | | | | | | |
| **Communications** | | | | | | |
| Staffing | 66,000* | 96,725 | 94,283 | 80,976 | 2.2 | Responsible for Early Years and Childcare internal, external and partner communication. Links to other agencies to represent the sector. Portal development is a key part of communications with schools. |
| Printing, marketing and web development | 53,000 | 9,912 | 3,461 | 10,000 | | |
| | 119,000 | 106,637 | 97,744 | 90,976 | 2.2 | |
| **Information** | | | | | | |
| **Information for Families and Young People** | 231,000 | | | | | |
| Staffing | | 224,796 | 198,709 | 222,173 | 6.0 | Information for families primarily through revised web pages and some hard copy materials. Team has reduced from 7.03 FTE and costs of £371k in September 2010 to 5.7 FTE and costs of £248k for 2012/13. Development staff now cover web development and for 12/13, 0.8 Development time will be focused on internal communication. These figures also refer to information for young people through Youthoria website, Cambs Coursefinder and online prospectus. |
| Web development and business support | | 39,050 | 46,498 | 0 | 0.0 | |
| Printing, marketing and web development | 140,000 | 9,961 | 796 | 30,500 | | |
| | 371,000 | 273,807 | 246,003 | 252,673 | 6.0 | |
| **Marketing** | | | | | | |
| Staffing | 60,000 | 46077 | 45,369 | 46,648 | 1.7 | Cambridgeshire Music Communications |

| Post Title / Description of Cost | Sep 2010 data £ | 11/12 Budget £ | 11/12 Actual £ | 12/13 Budget £ | 12/13 FTEs | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | post deleted. Other staffing costs relate to Grafham Water communications and Catering Services (CCS) communications / marketing. |
| Cambs Music Advertising/publicity/printing budgets | 11,000 | 12,000 | 6,813 | 5,000 | | |
| Grafham Water Advertising/publicity/printing budgets | 11,000 | 12,500 | 9,584 | 12,000 | | |
| CCS Marketing budgets | Not included | 113,269 | 127,417 | 132,132 | | |
| | 82,000 | 183,846 | 189,183 | 195,780 | 1.7 | |
| | **572,000** | **564,290** | **532,930** | **539,429** | **9.9** | |

*One post not included in these figures

## Customer Service and Transformation and LGSS

| Post Title / Description of Cost | 12/13 Budget | 12/13 FTEs | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| **External Communications:** | | | |
| ***Corporate Communications*** | | | |
| Staffing costs | 241,939 | 5.0 | Income stream of £49.8K via service level agreement with a District Council. |
| *Insurance - employers liability / third party* | *1,000* | | |
| *Staff Training & Development* | *1,000* | | |
| *Travel allowances - staff* | *2,000* | | |
| *General Office Expenses & Stationery* | *200* | | |
| *Printing* | *1,500* | | |
| *Office equipment* | *500* | | |
| *Books, Maps, Plans* | *50* | | |

| Post Title / Description of Cost | 12/13 Budget | 12/13 FTEs | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Staff subsistence* | *1,600* | | |
| *Office Hospitality* | *100* | | |
| *Computer software - Computer software* | *7,500* | | |
| *Mobile Phone - rental & calls* | *1,025* | | |
| *Postage & Carriage* | *20* | | |
| *Advertising / Publicity* | *1,500* | | |
| *Photograhy* | *500* | | |
| *Subscriptions* | *3,100* | | |
| *IT Advice & support* | *3,000* | | *CEX Application Support* |
| *Pressure* | *-247,503* | | *IPP savings to be identified* |
| *Income to support revenue expenditure* | *-49,775* | | |
| *Income* | *-5,000* | | *Income from providing services/advice/ comms training* |
| **CD** | | | |
| Advertising / Publicity | 3,750 | | Democratic Services - newspaper advertising in public notices section |
| **Contact Centre** | | | |
| Staffing | 1,675,765 | 68.8 | |
| Other expenditure | 302,728 | | |
| Income | -923,499 | | Internal and external recharges |
| **Web Strategy** | | | |
| Staffing | 181,612 | 5.0 | } |
| Other expenditure | 211,823 | | } Total budget includes £227k ITT loan transfer |
| Income | 0 | 0 | |
| **LGSS** | 0 | 0 | |
| | **1,416,435** | **78.8** | |

Economy, Transport and Environment

| Post Title / Description of Costs | 11/12 Budget | 11/12 Actual | 12/13 Budget | 12/13 FTEs | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staffing | 224,618 | 201,955 | 147,406 | 6.2 | The figures refer to posts associated with communications for the Guided Busway (vacant since October, and will be deleted), Environment Promotions (also to be deleted), Passenger Transport and Network Management |

Note – ETE communications budgets may reduce during 2012/13 as a result of service transformation initiatives.